



REPORT

OF AN

INVESTIGATION

INTO THE

LOSS OF THE "MORNA"

OF BELFAST,

MADE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE
BOARD OF TRADE,

BY

COMMANDER R. ROBERTSON, R.N.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.



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1855.

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REPORT.

My Lords,

Board of Trade, March 20, 1856.

IN pursuance of your Lordship's minute of the 6th instant, directing me to inquire into and report upon the loss of the Steam Ship "*Morna*," of Belfast, on the 25th ultimo, by striking on the rocks off St. David's Head, I made the necessary arrangements with the Belfast Screw Steam Ship Company, who most willingly produced all the witnesses required; and I proceeded with the inquiry, which continued from the 7th to the 19th, as the witnesses arrived at this Office.

It appears from the evidence elicited during this inquiry that the "*Morna*" was an Iron Screw Steam Ship of 363 tons register and 110 horse power, belonging to the Belfast Screw Steam Ship Company, and trading between Belfast and London. She left Belfast on the evening of Saturday, the 24th February, the weather being hazy and the wind from the S.W. The Crew consisted of 27, including the captain; and the passengers, of 55 recruits, two serjeants, two artillerymen, and four deck and cabin passengers, making a total on board of 90 souls.

She took her departure at 1 A.M. on the 25th from the Calf of Man, it bearing S.E. by S., distant from 16 to 18 miles; and shaped her course S.W. by S., which course the master thought would take him about one or two miles to the westward of the Smalls. She continued this course (viz. S.W. by S.) up to the time of her striking on the North Bishops at about 7 P.M.

From 1 A.M. until noon she went at full speed, averaging from 9½ to 10 knots per hour. It then becoming very thick, the engines were slowed, and from time to time as the weather cleared or thickened, the speed was increased or reduced.

From 4 P.M. up to the time of the ship striking, the speed of the engines was reduced to dead slow, the ship averaging about four knots per hour, the fog being so dense that the second mate states he could scarcely see the bowsprit from the bridge.

On the ship striking, a number of the recruits rushed into the starboard quarter boat, which either broke in two or (as the chief mate says) the fall was cut, and the whole of them in the boat, it is supposed, were precipitated into the water and perished.

Two boats were then lowered by order of the captain, into which a number of the crew and passengers got, and pulled for the rocks. Being unable however to effect a landing they returned and lay off the wreck, but would not go alongside to rescue more, although ordered by the captain to do so. The second mate was in charge of these boats, and states that he was afraid to do so, fearing that a number of the men remaining on board would jump into his boat and swamp her. These boats then left the wreck and did not return.

Of the two remaining boats on board, one was dashed to pieces by the sea striking her. The other boat (after the ship breaking amidships) was then got out, and the people on the wreck, with the captain, who was the last to leave, landed in her to the number of 31 or 32 on Ramsay Island.

After duly considering the evidence adduced, I am of opinion—

1st. That the captain, knowing the nature of the St. George's Channel, was to blame for continuing to run on a S.W. by S. course (which was a direct course for the Smalls) at a varied speed, which would prevent his ascertaining with accuracy the distance run, and without having seen the land for more than 17 hours, in consequence of the density of the fog.

2dly. That it appears both from the evidence of the captain and chief mate, that at 4 P.M. they supposed the ship to be within a few miles north or south of the Bishops; and that the weather was so thick that they could only see a few yards ahead:—I therefore consider the conduct of the captain culpable, in not stopping the ship, sounding, and then laying her head off shore until the weather cleared sufficiently to admit of his ascertaining his exact position.

Lastly, I attribute the loss of the ship to the Captain's not having made due allowance for the sets of the tide, by steering a more westerly course; and not having made use of the lead when, from the distance run, he ought to have known his proximity to the rocks on which the ship was lost.

In conclusion, I beg to add that the conduct of the Captain after the Vessel's striking appears to be deserving of praise, he having shown great coolness and having been the last to leave the wreck, after doing all in his power to save the lives of the passengers and crew.

In contrast with the Captain's conduct, I regret to state that the conduct of William Neil, the second mate, was most reprehensible, he having been one of the first to leave the ship; and on his return in the boat, when unable to land the passengers, on being ordered by the captain to come alongside and take in more, he refused to do so, and left the ship, although there were only 17 persons in his boat, which he confesses would have safely carried several more, a similar one having landed 31.

I have the honour to be,

My Lords,

Your Lordship's obedient Servant,

R. ROBERTSON,

Commander R.N.

To the Right Hon. the Lords of the Committee
of Privy Council for Trade.

APPENDIX.

MINUTE DIRECTING THE INVESTIGATION.

Board of Trade, March 6, 1855.

My Lords are pleased to appoint Captain Robertson as Special Inspector, under the 104th Section of the Mercantile Marine Act, to inquire into and report upon the circumstances attending the loss of the steam-ship "Morna," of Belfast, on the 25th ult., by striking on the rocks off St. David's Head.

(Signed)

STANLEY OF ALDERLEY.

INVESTIGATION INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES attending the Loss of the
SCREW STEAM SHIP "MORNA," on the 25th February 1855.

7th March 1855.

J. W. Tinker.

The Evidence of JOHN WILLIAM TINKER, late Second Engineer on board the "Morna."

March 7, 1855.

1. What is your name?—John William Tinker.
2. What are you?—An engineer.
3. Were you an engineer on board the "Morna" at the time of her loss?—I was, the second.
4. Where is the first engineer?—He was lost in the vessel.
5. Will you state what took place from the time of your leaving Belfast until the "Morna" was lost?—We left Belfast about half-past 5 on Saturday night, the 24th February last, the weather was then clear. I think it came on foggy early on Sunday morning, and continued very foggy the whole of the day. About 6 or 7 P.M. orders were given for the engines to be stopped; whilst I was in the act of stopping them the vessel struck. I then received orders to "reverse the engines" and "go astern"; then, to "stop her" and "go ahead full speed," but I could not, because I had not sufficient assistance, the engines requiring at least three persons to start them. I then heard persons on deck calling out to "come up from below, or else you will be drowned." There was no one else in the engine-room at this time but myself. I ran on deck, where I met Mr. Green, the first engineer, who told me to come and get into the boat with him, but I did not, but went into another with the second mate, a Prussian captain, several sailors and recruits, and some firemen. We shoved off and pulled round the rock to see if we could find any landing, but could not; we then remained under the rock for some hours, and on seeing the South Bishop's Light when it cleared up a little, we pulled for it, but lost it again on its coming on thick; we however saw it again about 5 or 6 A.M. on Monday morning, pulled for it, and spoke to the men at the lighthouse, who told us the way to Milford. We pulled for some time in the direction pointed out, but finding it too rough in Jack's Sound to go through, we put back and were picked up by a small yacht, and he towed us into the main land, where we all landed. He then took the number landed in the two boats, and directed us the way to Milford, about five or six miles distant, there we met the agent of the Shipwrecked Mariners' Institution, Captain Lewis, who provided us with food and bedding, and sent us to our homes.
6. You state that it was foggy the whole of Sunday; was it any thicker about the time the vessel struck than it had been during the earlier part of the day?—I cannot say, as I was very little on deck.
7. At what speed had you been going during that day?—Half speed up to 2 P.M., and from that time up to the time of the vessel striking, dead slow.
8. At what speed do you suppose the vessel was going at the time you were ordered to stop the engines?—I suppose about four knots.
9. What does she go at full speed in fine smooth water, such as the day in question?—About 11 or 12 knots.
10. Were the engines stopped at the time the vessel struck?—I had just time to throw them out of gear.
11. You state you were ordered to reverse the engines, did you do so?—Yes, they were reversed.

J. W. Fisher.

March 7, 1885.

12. You were then ordered to go ahead, did you do so?—No, because I was the only person left in the engine-room at that time, all the stokers having run on deck, thinking the vessel was sinking.

13. Did you use any endeavour to keep the men below?—Yes, I told them to stand by the engine, but they would not, and ran on deck.

14. Finding the men all gone on deck, what did you do; I mean as regards the engine or boilers?—I opened the safety-valves, and ran on deck.

15. You are quite sure you opened the safety-valves?—Yes, I am quite sure.

16. You state that it took at least three persons to start the engines,—why was that?—From the make of the engines, which started with levers.

17. What was the nominal horse power of the engines?—160 horse power.

18. At the time you went on deck, where was the captain, and what did he appear to be doing?—He was on the bridge, giving orders to lower the boats, and endeavouring to quiet the recruits.

19. What were the recruits doing?—They were getting into the boats hanging at the davits, and the captain appeared to be endeavouring to quiet them, and get them out, until the boats were lowered.

20. One boat is said to have been broken in two by the recruits getting into her at the davits,—is that the case?—I did not see it, but heard that it was so.

21. Did this take place before you left the ship in the boat you were in?—I cannot say.

22. You have stated that the boat you were in could have carried more: how is it that you left the ship without doing so?—We left on account of the men remaining on board jumping into her.

23. Who gave directions for the boat shoving off?—I cannot say; but the second mate was in the boat.

24. Do you think the second mate did?—I cannot say, as everybody was giving orders.

25. Where was the captain and chief mate at the time you shoved off?—The captain was on the bridge, and desired us to take the female into the boat, which we did, and immediately shoved off.

26. Are you aware of the captain giving any orders for you to shove off?—No; all I heard was his giving directions to take the female into the boat.

27. Had any boat left before you?—Yes, one had with two sailors and several recruits and seamen.

28. Did the boat that left before you remain by the ship or pull for the land?—She went away from the wreck, and we fell in with her afterwards.

29. How many persons were in the boat that you were in?—Seventeen.

30. How many more could she have carried?—I think four or five more.

31. Could the other boat have carried the same number?—Yes; because she was, I believe, the same size.

32. What boats were left behind when you left?—Two others; the life-boat was one of them.

33. How long was it between the ship striking on the rock and your leaving in the boat?—About a quarter of an hour; but we remained near the wreck for some hours, after finding that we could get no landing on the rock.

34. When you last saw the wreck, what state was it in?—The foremast and funnel were gone, and the afterpart of the ship under water.

35. Was the captain and others then on board?—Yes; the captain, chief mate, and some others.

36. What was the chief mate doing on your first getting on deck?—I don't know; I did not see him until we finally passed the wreck, and were pulling for the South Bishop Lighthouse.

37. Was the other boat in company with you at this time?—Yes.

38. Did you hear the captain, or any body on board the vessel, call to you to come back at that time?—I heard the captain's voice calling out, but cannot say what he said.

39. Are you quite sure it was not for you and the other boat to come back?—I cannot say.

40. Was the second mate in command of the boat and giving directions when the captain called to him?—Yes; he was steering and giving directions.

41. When the captain called out did you hear the mate make any remark?—No; but I heard some of the others say he wanted to go back, but the crew were unwilling.

42. Do you happen to know if the boats were complete?—Yes; I believe the crew considered them to be very fine boats.

43. Are you in the habit of going slow in thick weather?—Yes.

44. Can you give me any further information?—No.

45. Do you happen to know any of your firemen who can give me any information?—Yes; I think a man named John Green, a fireman, who remained until the last with the captain.

46. Do you consider the captain a careful man?—Yes; very much so.

47. How long have you been an engineer in that vessel?—About six weeks.

48. Have you ever been at sea before as an engineer?—Never.

49. Did the senior engineer come down into the engine-room after the ship struck?—Yes; and immediately ran on deck again.

50. Was there any water in the engine-room when you ran on deck?—Yes; over some part of the plates in the engine-room.

51. How many water-tight partitions had the "Morna"?—I think four or five.

The above having been read over to me, I declare it to be correct.

(Signed)

J. W. TINKER,
Second Engineer of the "Morna."

Witness, THOMAS GRAY.

J. W. Tinker.

March 7, 1855.

Saturday, 10th March 1855.

John Green.

The Evidence of JOHN GREEN, late Stoker on board the Screw Steamer "Morna."

March 10, 1855.

52. What is your name?—John Green.

53. What were you in the "Morna" at the time of the accident?—Stoker.

54. What was the state of the weather at the time of the "Morna" striking on the rock?—So thick that we could not see half a ship's length.

55. What speed were the engines going?—Dead slow.

56. What speed do you suppose the vessel to have been going at the time of her striking?—I cannot say, not being a sailor.

57. Do you know whether the captain was on deck at the time of the vessel's striking?—I cannot say; I was not on deck at the time, but I saw him on deck five minutes before she struck, and about five minutes afterwards, on my going on deck from the engine-room.

58. Did you hear any orders given by the captain to lower the boats?—No, sir, I did not; but the sailors and soldiers were lowering them, the two mates being present; the captain was on the bridge at the time.

59. Relate, as near as you remember, what took place from that time up to the time of your landing, as I understand you did, with the captain?—I went on the bridge to the captain, who asked me where the engineer, Mr. Green, was. I replied, I had left him going down to the engine room. There was at this time great confusion—the recruits jumping into the boats. I remained on the bridge with the captain about a couple of hours. The remaining people were employed in getting out the starboard life boat, which was lying on the deck inside the gunwale, with tackles from the davits hooked to her. The after davit was broken, which caused great delay in getting the boat out. Those who remained on board, including the captain, chief mate, myself, and some recruits, amounting in all to 31, then left the ship in this life boat, remaining in sight of her during the greater part of the night. On the following morning we pulled in round Ramsay Island and landed there.

60. Did you observe any of the boats shove off when you were on the bridge with the captain?—Yes, the larboard life boat.

61. Did you hear the captain give any directions to the people in that boat?—Yes; he told them to land the people in the boat and come back again as quick as possible.

62. Did that boat return to the ship?—No.

63. Do you happen to know whether the second mate was in that boat?—No, I do not.

64. What was the conduct of the captain?—He was very cool, and told us to keep ourselves quiet, as it would be much the best for us.

65. What was the state of the ship when you left her?—The bow and after part of the ship were partly under water; in fact, the ship was broken in two.

66. Was there much sea on?—No; but the tide was very strong.

The mark of JOHN GREEN, +
Late Stoker of the "Morna."

I hereby certify that the above evidence was read over to John Green, and that he affixed his mark in my presence.

(Signed)

THOMAS GRAY.

Monday, 12th March 1855.

William Carter.

Evidence of WILLIAM CARTER, late Master of the Screw Steam Ship "Morna," of Belfast.

March 12, 1855.

67. What is your name?—William Carter.

68. You were captain of the "Morna" at the time of her loss?—I was.

69. Have you any certificate from the Board of Trade?—Yes; a certificate of service.

70. How many years have you been at sea?—In all 26 years.

71. How long have you been in command of steam vessels?—Ten years; about 4 months in the "Morna."

72. What was the "Morna"?—An iron screw steamer of 363 tons register, 110 horse power, belonging to the Belfast Screw Steam Ship Company, and trading between Belfast and London.

73. Was the "Morna" surveyed by the Board of Trade Surveyors, and had she boats and other equipments according to Act of Parliament, and in good order?—Yes, in every respect.

William Carter.

March 12, 1855.

74. Will you have the goodness to state what occurred from the time of your leaving Belfast until you struck upon the North Bishop's Rocks?—We left Belfast on Saturday, the 24th February, at 5.15 p.m. The weather was hazy, with a strong breeze from the S.W. The crew consisted of 27, including myself; the passengers of 55 recruits, 2 sergeants, 2 artillerymen, and 3 deck and 2 cabin passengers, making a total of 90 souls. We then proceeded on our passage to London, intending to touch at Portsmouth, and took our departure at 1 a.m. of the 25th from the Calf of Man, the light bearing S.E. by S, distant about 18 miles. We shaped our course S.W. by S. by compass for the Smalls Light, which ought to have taken us about a mile or two outside of it. At 8 a.m. light airs and hazy; at noon calm and foggy. Slowed the engines to half-speed, keeping the bell and whistle constantly going. At 4 p.m., the fog having increased, I ordered the engines to go dead slow. At 7 p.m. a dense fog and a heavy swell; the vessel struck on some rocks, which I subsequently found to be the North Bishops. Immediately on her striking, I gave the order to the chief mate to clear away the boats to save life, seeing there was no chance of saving the vessel. The first boat lowered was the starboard small quarter-boat, and a number of the recruits forced their way into her before she was lowered. In the act of lowering, her bows were stove in, and the men precipitated into the water, and the boat was lost. The next two boats lowered were the port life-boat and the port quarter-boat, into which I ordered the crew and passengers, desiring the crews in those boats to land them and return for the remaining persons. The fourth boat was stove by a sea breaking into her. There then remained the starboard life-boat, which was got into the water, the ship being broken in two. Into this boat I put those that remained, and got in myself, and landed on Ramsay Island. The port life-boat and port quarter-boat, which I had ordered to land the passengers, passed by the wreck, not having been able to do so. I hailed them to come alongside to take in some more, but they did not do so, and pulled away. This took place about half an hour before I finally left in the starboard life-boat.

75. You have stated that you have commanded steamers for 10 years; in what trade have you chiefly been employed?—Chiefly between Cork and London, and Belfast and London.

76. What is the course you generally take in proceeding from Belfast to the Land's End?—I generally, after leaving the Copeland, steer for the South Rock, and from thence I generally take my departure for the Smalls, steering about S.W. by S.

77. In doing so, do you generally see the Calf of Man Lights?—Yes, if clear weather.

78. What lights do you expect to see, in steering that course, before reaching the Smalls?—In clear weather the South Bishops, and sometimes the Wicklow.

79. What is the distance between the Calf of Man Light and the South Bishops?—About 131 miles.

80. You continued from 1 a.m. until noon at full speed; at what speed was she going during that time?—About 9½ knots.

81. Are you in the habit of using the log?—Yes.

82. How often do you heave it?—Every two hours.

83. Did you heave it every two hours on the day of the wreck?—Yes.

84. At noon you went at half speed with the engines; at what speed do you suppose the vessel was then going?—About four knots.

85. At 4 o'clock you state you went dead slow; what was her speed then?—About the same.

86. About seven you struck; was her speed the same at that time?—About a minute before she struck, the engines were ordered to be stopped.

87. At the time of striking, did you give any orders about the engines?—Just before striking I ordered them to be reversed, seeing breakers.

88. You have stated the distance between the Calf of Man and the South Bishops to be about 131 miles, and the distance you appear to have run by your own showing is 132 miles, making you within a few miles of the rocks in question; would it not have been early common prudence to have put your vessel's head off the shore and to have laid to until the weather cleared?—It was my intention to have done so just before the accident happened.

89. Then why did you not do so?—I went down to consult my chart.

90. Where did you suppose yourself to be at that time?—About eight or nine miles to the W.N.W. of the Bishops.

91. Did you get a cast of the lead at any time during that afternoon?—No.

92. If you had, would not the soundings near the South Bishops have shown that the ship was near them?—I think not.

93. Had you sounded and found yourself in from 33 to 35 fathoms water, would you have hauled the ship off shore?—Yes; because I should have considered myself too close to the Welch coast.

94. Are you in the habit of going between the Smalls and the main?—Yes; day and night, if clear.

95. How do you account for the position of the ship at 7 p.m.?—I attribute it to the ship's going slow; and the tide and swell having a greater effect upon her than I allowed for.

96. Have you any reason to suppose there was anything wrong in your compasses?—No; but they were sluggish.

97. When were the compasses adjusted, and by whom?—They were adjusted at Gourock by McGregor, of Glasgow, the ship being swung, and the compasses corrected by magnets.

William Carter,
March 12, 1855.

98. What was the state of the tide at the time of your striking?—About half an hour before low water.

99. In what direction do you suppose the tide to have been setting for two or three hours before you struck?—Where I supposed the ship to have been it would have been setting to the S.W.; but where I now find the ship must have been, it would be setting in N.E. by E. towards the Welch shore; and to this and the swell I attribute the accident.

100. What was the conduct of your mates after the ship struck?—The first mate behaved very well, and remained with me to the last; the second mate did as he was ordered, except that on his return in the boat, from not being able to land the passengers, when called by me alongside to take in more, he did not come.

101. Did the crew behave properly?—Yes.

102. How far ahead could you see at the time of the vessel's striking?—A very few yards.

103. From what time had it been as thick as that?—About 4 o'clock.

104. Can you tell me the number of lives lost?—Eighteen recruits, one sergeant, one steerage passenger, and the first engineer, in all 21.

105. Are you in the habit of running in weather as thick as it was the evening in question?—That depends upon the distance we are from the land; if close in I should heave to; but if at sea I should go slow.

106. Is there any further information you can give me?—No, not any.

107. Had you a look-out man on, and had you been on deck for any length of time before the accident?—Yes, I had a look-out man on, and had been on deck the greater part of the day. I was looking at my chart when I heard something reported ahead; I had just time to get on the bridge and to order the engines to be stopped, when the vessel struck.

The above having been read over to me, I certify the same to be correct.

(Signed) W. CARTER,

Late Master of the "Morna."

Witness, THOMAS GRAY.

Wednesday, 14th March 1855.

Evidence of JOHN CROSBY, late Chief Mate of the "Morna."

John Crosby.

March 14, 1855.

108. What is your name?—John Crosby.

109. What were you on board the "Morna"?—Chief mate.

110. Have you a certificate from the Board of Trade?—Yes; of service.

111. How many years have you been at sea?—Twenty-nine years.

112. Have you ever been in command of a merchant ship?—Yes; I have commanded several ships, both sailing and steam.

113. Are you well acquainted with the St. George's Channel?—Yes; I am well acquainted both with the St. George's and the English Channel.

114. Did you consider the "Morna" well supplied with boats and equipments as required by Act of Parliament?—Yes; well supplied—as well as any steamer I was ever in.

115. Will you have the goodness to state what occurred from the time of your leaving Belfast in the "Morna," up to the time of your landing at Ramsay Island after the wreck?—We left Belfast on Saturday the 24th February at 5.15 p.m., wind southerly, with a fresh breeze, and inclined to be hazy; our crew consisting of seven seamen, two mates, one quartermaster, one captain, one cook, one steward, three boys, and I think nine firemen and two engineers; and our passengers, of 55 recruits, two sergeants, two artillerymen, two deck and two cabin passengers, making a total of 90, and a cargo of provisions. We proceeded on our voyage, passed the Copeland Light at about 8 p.m., weather still hazy. At 1 a.m. on the 25th we made the Calf of Man Lights, bearing S.E. by S., distant about 16 or 18 miles. We then shaped a course S.W. by S. by compass, for the Smalls; this course ought to have taken us about two miles outside the Smalls had we continued at full speed all the time. At noon, the weather getting thicker, the engines were slowed to half speed, occasionally going slower or quicker as the weather thickened or cleared. About 4 p.m. we went dead slow, not increasing the speed to my knowledge till the time of striking, which was near 7 p.m.; the engines were stopped by my orders, on the man on the look-out reporting "land ahead," and the captain immediately ordered them to be reversed; but I requested the captain not to reverse them, lest the vessel should go down with us in deep water; I believe my wish was attended to. The vessel immediately after striking, swung broadside on to the rocks, her starboard side towards them, the current setting strong on the port quarter. The captain gave me orders to see the boats lowered, in order to save the passengers. I went aft and saw the port quarter boat lowered into the water, and ordered them to lay off but not to leave the ship. I then went forward and had the port life-boat lowered; in the meantime a number of the recruits got into the jolly boat on the starboard quarter, and while in the act of lowering, one of the recruits cut the after-tackle fall, and the whole of the people in the boat were precipitated into the water and perished. Soon after a sea struck the ship on the starboard quarter, crushing the starboard quarter-boat to pieces. Immediately the sea striking, the vessel gave a roll and parted amidships, the funnel having gone

John Crosby.

March 14, 1855.

about 10 minutes before. I then climbed on the top of the house to the captain, and with the assistance of the remaining recruits and one seaman, got the starboard life-boat into the water. The fore part of the vessel fell over on her side off the rock, and a number of the recruits then rushed into the life-boat with the intention of leaving the ship; but I had the end of the pointer fast on board the ship, finding that the recruits were likely to lose the boat. I requested Captain Carter to allow me to go in the boat, and endeavour to save the lives of the remaining recruits who were clinging to the various parts of the wreck. I, accompanied by a seaman named Snoddersen, got into the boat and rescued four men off the mizenmast, when a sea struck the boat and fouled her of the mizen rigging. About 9 P.M. the captain got into the boat, after taking every one else off, and we then lost the vessel and pulled about until daylight in a dense fog, when we effected a landing between 7 and 8 A.M. of the 26th on Ramsay Island.

116. Considering the state of the weather, do you consider that S.W. by S. was a sufficient westerly course to have steered?—Yes; I would have felt every confidence in that course had she continued at full speed.

117. Do you suppose, then, that the vessel getting into the position you found her in was attributable to the set of the tide, and the speed of the vessel being reduced?—Yes, I do.

118. Would you steer the same course in thick weather (viz. S.W. by S.) as in clear?—No; I would steer S.W. by S. until I had run about 100 miles, and then I would alter my course from half a point to a point more westerly, until I felt sure that I was to the southward of the Smalls.

119. Where did you consider the ship to be at 4 P.M. on the 25th?—I supposed the Smalls to bear S.W. by S. about 22 miles.

120. It appears from your evidence that sometimes you went fast and sometimes slow; do you think it possible under those circumstances to tell within 15 or 20 miles of your distance run?—I should say we might come within about five miles of the actual distance run.

121. How often did you heave your log?—Every two hours, I think, up to 4 P.M.

122. Had you a patent log on board?—Yes, Massey's.

123. Did you make use of it on this occasion?—No; not on this occasion.

124. Are you in the habit of using it?—Yes.

125. Do you consider it correct?—I consider it tolerably correct.

126. Then if you had used it on the day in question would it not have enabled you to make sure of your position—I mean as to distance run?—Yes, I think it would.

127. You have stated as your opinion, that had you been in command of the ship you would have altered your course from half a point to a point more to the westward, after you had run about 100 miles, to clear the Smalls. Did you give the captain any opinion about the matter?—No.

128. At 4 P.M. you supposed the ship to be about 22 miles from the Smalls, that would place you about six miles from the North Bishops; would it not have been only a matter of common prudence then, as you could only see a few yards ahead, to have put the ship's head off shore and waited until it cleared up?—Yes, I think it would.

129. Did you sound with the lead at all that afternoon?—No; not that I am aware of.

130. If you had, would it have given you any idea of the position of the ship?—I think it would, because if I was in a fair way for the Smalls I should expect to find 50 fathoms or more water.

131. But if you had found yourself in 38 fathoms, what course would you have pursued?—I should have hauled off to the westward.

132. Do you know if it was the captain's intention to have done so about that time?—I am not aware; but I think it was his intention, after looking at the chart (which he left me to do), to sound.

133. Why do you think that?—Because he had ordered the lead and line to be got ready on the top of the house.

134. Are you in the habit of using your deep-sea lead in thick weather?—No.

135. What was the state of the tide at the time she got on shore?—About half ebb.

136. In what direction do you consider the tide to have been setting, about two hours before you struck?—About north-east.

137. How far could you see at the time of the vessel striking?—Not more than half a ship's length.

138. From what time had it been as thick as that?—From about 4 P.M.

139. Was there any look-out man on at the time she struck?—Yes; the chief and second mate on the bridge and a man on the fore-castle looking out.

140. Do you happen to know the number of lives lost?—Twenty-one.

141. Do you consider the captain to be a careful man?—I do.

142. Did the second mate and crew do their duty properly?—As long as they remained by the ship, to the best of my knowledge.

143. Did you hear the captain call to the two boats that were leaving the ship, one with the second mate in, to come back to save more people?—Yes, I did; but they did not do so.

144. Do you think the second mate heard the captain's order to come back?—Other parties in his boat I know heard the captain, so I should think he did.

145. What is the general conduct of the second mate?—He is a steady man and attentive to his duty.

146. To what do you attribute the ship being so much out of her supposed position?—To the influence of the S.W. current and swell while going slow.

147. Are the currents in the St. George's Channel very strong?—Very strong and very uncertain.

148. Have you any reason to suppose that your compasses were not correct?—I believe the one we steered by was correct.

149. Do you ever remember having run so great a distance in the St. George's Channel as you did in this instance in the "Morna," on one course without sighting the land?—No, I should not think it prudent to do so, especially in hazy weather, on account of the uncertainty of the tides.

150. Can you give me any further information?—No, I think not.

151. Was the captain on deck the greater part of that day?—Yes; I should say from 9 A.M. until the time of the vessel striking he went down below occasionally, and then only for a few minutes.

The above having been read over to me, I certify the same to be correct.

(Signed) JOHN CROSSY,
Late Chief Mate of the "Morna."

Witness, THOMAS GRAY.

Thursday, 15th March 1855.

John Crossy.

March 14, 1855.

W. J. Badgers.

March 14, 1855.

The Evidence of WILLIAM JOHN RODGERS, late A.B. Seaman on board the "Morna."

152. What is your name?—William John Rogers.

153. What were you on board the "Morna"?—Able seaman.

154. How long have you been at sea?—Nine years at sea, four months in the "Morna."

155. Were you at the helm at the time of the "Morna" striking on the rocks?—Yes.

156. How was her head at that time?—S.W. by S.

157. How long had you been at the helm previous to her striking?—Twenty minutes.

158. I suppose you relieved the man at the helm at 6 o'clock?—Yes, and he told me to steer S.W. by S.

159. What was the state of the weather from the time of your taking charge of the helm at 6 o'clock to the time of the accident?—So thick, that I could scarcely perceive the man on the forecastle.

160. Had you been much on deck during that day?—Yes, a great deal of it.

161. Was it much thicker at 6 o'clock than it had been during the day?—About the same all day, from 8 o'clock in the morning.

162. Was there much wind or sea?—Not much wind, but a heavy swell.

163. Had you been at the helm any part of that day previous to 6 o'clock?—Yes, from 8 to 8.30 A.M.

164. What course was she steering then?—S.W. by S. $\frac{1}{2}$ S.

165. Are you quite sure of that?—Yes.

166. Was her head S.W. by S. $\frac{1}{2}$ S. when you took the helm from the man at 8 o'clock; and was that the course he told you to steer?—Yes.

167. Who had charge of the watch at that time?—The second mate.

168. Did he look at the compass during the time you were there?—Yes.

169. Did he find any fault with the course you were steering?—No.

170. Do you ever remember to have run so long a distance (namely, from the Calf of Man to the Bishops,) without sighting land?—No; I do not remember ever having done so.

171. Do you happen to remember whether the speed of the vessel was altered during the day?—Yes; sometimes we went slow, and sometimes faster, as it thickened or cleared.

172. Did you observe the log hove during that day?—Yes, I saw it hove once; it was the custom to heave it every two hours.

173. You say she sometimes went slow and sometimes faster; do you think it was possible, under those circumstances, to ascertain within some ten miles during the day's run her position?—No, I think not.

174. Will you state all that you remember about what took place after the ship struck?—When the vessel struck, the captain came on the bridge and ordered the engines to be reversed. They had been stopped by the chief mate's order, on land being reported ahead. The ship striking heavy, the captain ordered the boats to be got ready. The first boat that we commenced lowering, so many of the recruits got into that they tore her bows out, and the men fell into the water and were drowned. We then lowered two other boats by the captain's orders, one of which I got into, and we shoved off, to see if we could find a place to land; finding none, we returned to the ship. The second mate was in charge of this boat. The captain called to us to come alongside, but the second mate replied to the captain that he could not come alongside till he had landed those in the boat. We then pulled away, and lost sight of the ship and land both. We made the North Bishops Light, the other boat in company. We bailed the light-keeper, who answered us at daylight, and directed us to Martin's Haven. A pleasure yacht took both of us in tow, and towed us into the haven, and directed us on our way to Milford.

W. J. Rodgers.

March 16, 1855.

175. You are quite sure that the bows of the boat the recruits got into broke from their weight, and they were thrown into the water and drowned?—Yes; for I saw it happen myself, being close to it.

176. When the captain called to your boat to come alongside, did the crew object to go alongside, or was it the mate?—Both objected.

177. Do you know the name of the gentleman to whom that yacht belongs?—I believe a Mr. Robertson.

178. Can you give me any further information?—No; but I said to the mate when the captain called the boat alongside, that he ought to be ashamed to go away without rendering more assistance to those remaining on board.

179. How many more people could you have carried in that boat?—About ten.

180. Was there any sailor in the boat besides yourself?—Two.

181. Did they say anything?—Yes; they said it would not be safe to go alongside, there were 18 then in the boat.

The above evidence having been read over to me, I certify the same to be true.

(Signed) WILLIAM JOHN RODGERS,
Late A.B. on board the "Morna."

Witness, THOMAS GRAY.

Robert Sanderson.

March 15, 1855.

15th March 1855.

Evidence of ROBERT SANDERSON, late A.B. on board the "Morna."

182. What is your name?—Robert Sanderson, 15 years at sea.

183. What were you on board the "Morna"?—A.B.

184. Were you on the look-out at the time of the "Morna" running on the rock?—Yes, I had been on from six o'clock.

185. Did you report the land ahead first?—No, the look-out man on the foremast; I was on the bridge.

186. What was the state of the weather?—Very thick.

187. How far could you see ahead of the ship?—About 10 or 12 yards.

188. How long had it been so thick as that?—The greater part of the day.

189. Had you been at the helm during that day?—Yes, sir, from 12 to 2.

190. What course did you steer?—S.W. by S.

191. Are you quite sure that was the course?—Yes.

192. Who was in charge of the watch at that time?—The captain.

193. Was that the course given you on taking charge of the helm?—Yes.

194. Did the captain frequently visit the compass during that time?—Yes, very frequently.

195. Have you ever run so great a distance in the St. George's Channel without seeing land, as from the Calf of Man to the Bishops?—No, sir.

196. Was the vessel sometimes going faster and sometimes slow that day?—Yes.

197. Do you think it possible to tell within a dozen miles the distance run under those circumstances?—I think it would be very hard.

198. When did you leave the wreck?—In the last boat with the captain and chief officer.

199. Relate what took place after the ship struck, to the best of your recollection?—Just before the ship struck, on land being reported, the chief mate ordered the engines to be stopped. The captain came on the top of the house and sang out to "turn her astern full speed." But one of the officers said to the captain, it would be better to turn her ahead. I cannot say if anything was done to the engines. The captain ordered the crew to clear away the boats and be cool. The recruits jumped into all the boats before they were in the water. One of the boats, into which a great many recruits had jumped, gave way in the tackle fall, and the recruits were drowned. Two other boats were then lowered, which I assisted in doing; the people got into them and left the ship, but returned again within half. The captain called to them to come alongside, but they did not, but pulled away. The second mate and second engineer were in them. I remained by the ship with the captain, chief mate, and several others. We got the remaining boat out and picked up all the men from the different parts of the wreck, by the captain's orders; we then took the captain in, who had remained on the wreck until now. We shoved off, and landed the recruits on Ramsey Island, and from thence the captain and crew went to St. David's, and sent a boat for the recruits and sergeant.

200. What was the state of the ship when you left her?—Fore and after parts under water, the mast heads only showing; the midship part was on her broadside.

201. Is there anything you wish to add to your evidence?—No.

The above having been read over to me, I certify the same to be true.

(Signed) ROBERT SANDERSON,
Late A.B. on board the "Morna."

Witness, THOMAS GRAY.

15th March 1855.

William Neil.

March 15, 1855.

Evidence of WILLIAM NEIL, late Second Mate on board the "Morna."

202. What is your name?—William Neil.

203. What were you in the "Morna"?—Second mate.

204. How long have you been at sea?—Thirty-four years; 16 years as mate.

205. Are you well acquainted with the St. George's Channel?—Yes, pretty well.

206. Have the goodness to state what occurred from the time of your leaving Belfast until you landed at Martin's Haven Creek, after the wreck?—We left Belfast on Saturday, the 24th February, in the evening, wind variable and inclined to be hazy. At half-past 11 p.m. we saw the South Rock Light, bearing W.N.W., distant about eight miles. At 12 I went below, my watch being over. I came on deck at 4 a.m. and found the morning hazy; we were then going at full speed, about ten knots, which we continued to go until I left the deck at 8 a.m. I returned to my watch again at 12, and found her going slow, about 5½ knots, when I hove the log. I believe we continued at that speed until 4 p.m., when I again went off deck and remained until within 10 minutes of the vessel striking. At about 20 minutes after 6 p.m. I went on the bridge to relieve the chief mate, and remarked to him that I heard a sound on the water which I considered was wind coming, but which must have been the breakers. The look-out man sang out "Land ahead." I sang out "Stop the engines," which was repeated by many voices. She struck just about the time the captain came on the bridge. He ordered the engines to be reversed, but they were not. I said to the captain, "Don't reverse the engines or we shall drown all hands." The captain gave orders to lower the boats. I intended to the lowering of one, and got into it myself, with sixteen others, and shoved off. One boat left before me; I overtook that boat, and we both attempted to land our passengers on the rocks, but failed in doing so owing to the surf. We pulled back again past the ship, when I heard the captain call to come alongside. I replied I would as soon as I had landed the passengers then in the boat. I then pulled round to the other side of the rock, but was unable to effect a landing there. We then thought of returning to the ship when we saw a light (the other boat being with us); we pulled for that light, thinking it was the South Bishop, but lost sight of it in the fog. We saw the moon sometimes through the fog, and pulled as near as I could tell in a S.W. direction. At 4 a.m. we made the Bishop's Light, and hailed the Light-keeper. He told us the direction to pull in for Ramsey Island, but we thought it better to pull to Schorne, which we knew. We then pulled for Jack's Sound, when we fell in with a yacht belonging to Mr. Robertson. This yacht took us both in tow, and we landed at Martin's Haven, and then walked to Milford.

207. You state that you know the St. George's Channel pretty well; was S.W. by S. a proper course to have steered, supposing the ship to have been 17 miles N.W. by N. from the Calf of Man Lights?—Yes; if it was intended to go between the Smalls and the Main.

208. How far ahead could you see at the time you went to relieve the chief mate, viz., 6 p.m. on the 25th?—I could scarcely see the bowsprit.

209. Where did you consider the ship to be at that time?—About 9 or 10 miles from the Smalls; between the Bishops and the Smalls; in fact, I cannot say much about it.

210. To what do you attribute the ship's getting into the position you found her in?—To the slow speed of the vessel, the swell from the S.W., and the in-draught.

211. Don't you think it would have been only prudent, considering you could scarcely see the bowsprit, and knowing that you were in the vicinity of the Bishops, to have stopped and sounded?—Yes, I think it would.

212. Do you think, that considering the weather was so thick, it was safe to go on, considering that you had run from 120 to 130 miles in a S.W. by S. course, without seeing any land?—I consider not, unless the captain was perfectly sure of his position.

213. Are you in the habit of running in very thick weather?—Yes, occasionally, to make a passage.

214. Are you in the habit of sounding in thick weather?—Only where the hand lead can be used.

215. It is stated by the captain in evidence, that he ordered you to come alongside; and you have also admitted that to be the case; why did you not obey his order?—Because the boat was loaded, and I was afraid if any more got into her she would be swamped.

216. Did the crew in the boat object to your going alongside?—Yes; and I was unwilling to go myself.

217. What was the size of that boat?—I do not know, but she was the same size as the boat that carried 32 persons, and in which the captain went in.

218. How many had you in your boat?—Seventeen.

219. Then you could certainly have carried ten more with safety?—Yes; five more if we had had them on board.

220. Then surely you ought not to have left the ship without those five?—I was afraid to go alongside the ship, thinking there would be a rush, and swamp her.

221. Was a seaman named William John Rodgers in the boat with you?—Yes.

222. Did he tell you that you ought to be ashamed of yourself to go away without rendering more assistance to those on board?—No, he did not; he said nothing to me about going back, that I remember.

William Neil.
March 16, 1866.

223. Were your boats fit for service at the davits?—Three of them were at the davits and two on the dock.
224. Had they covers on them?—Three out of the five had.
225. Then they could not be ready for service?—They were complete with oars and tholes.
226. Who was in command of the other boat that left the ship with you?—One of the seamen who followed my directions.
227. Have you anything further to state?—Nothing.
The above evidence having been read over to me, I certify the same to be correct.

(Signed) WILLIAM NEIL,
Late Second Mate of the "Morna."

Witness, THOMAS GRAY.

William Ritchie.
March 19, 1866.

Monday, 19th March 1866.

Evidence of WILLIAM RITCHIE, Staff Sergeant of the Recruits proceeding from Belfast to Chatham and Canterbury on board the "Morna."

228. What is your name?—William Ritchie.
229. What were you on board the "Morna"?—Staff sergeant of recruits proceeding from Belfast to Chatham and Canterbury.
230. Do you know anything about the course steered?—No.
231. How many recruits were there in all?—Fifty-five recruits, and two sergeants.
232. Have the goodness to state what you know of the occurrences after leaving Belfast?—We left Belfast on 24th February; everything proceeded well until Sunday 25th, about a quarter to 7 p.m., when, being in the engine room, I heard a voice from above call "stop the engine," and "reverse the engine," and immediately after this the vessel struck. I ran on deck and observed a number of the recruits rush into the starboard quarter boat, and they went down by the side of the vessel, and disappeared. At this time the two boats pushed away with the second mate. The funnel went over, and the vessel parted amidship as nearly as possible at the same moment. I remained on the fore part of the wreck with the captain and first mate, until we left her at about half-past 10; during this time, while on the wreck, the conduct of the captain was beyond praise; he was the last to leave the wreck, and gave his orders with cool determination during the whole time. The conduct of the chief officer, Mr. Crosby, and Robert Sanderson, a seaman, who stopped with the captain to the last, was also highly praiseworthy.
233. Were you the senior sergeant on board?—Yes.
234. Then how was it you allowed the recruits to rush into the starboard quarter boat?—They were raw recruits, and it was impossible for me or any other man to keep them under command—they are very different from drilled soldiers altogether.
235. What were you doing in the engine-room?—I was drying my coat, which I had got wet by remaining on the bridge, where I had been assisting the captain on the look out.
236. How many persons were in the boat in which you landed?—Twenty-three recruits, myself, and seven others.
237. Are you sure there was no person remaining on the wreck when you left?—I am sure there were none alive, for we stopped two hours by the wreck, and if there had been we should have seen or heard them.
238. Are you of opinion that all the persons missing were drowned in the starboard quarter boat?—No, I think that some of them were drowned in the steerage. There was not more than eight or ten in that boat.
239. What was the conduct of the second mate?—I don't think it was good; he ran away instead of coming alongside when the captain ordered him to come to take more people off the wreck.
240. Is there anything further you wish to state?—Nothing further, only that I felt it my duty to come here and testify as to the praiseworthy conduct of the captain and his chief officer, and of the good order of the recruits and others who remained on the wreck to the last.

The above having been read over to me, I certify the same to be true.
(Signed) Wm. Ritchie, Staff Sergeant.

Witness, THOMAS GRAY.

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